

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

TRUSTEES AND SUPERINTENDENT

OF THE

ASYLUM FOR THE BLIND,

OF THE

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI,

For the Year 1876.

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PRINTED BY AUTHORITY.

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JACKSON, MISS.:  
POWER & BARKSDALE, STATE PRINTERS.

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# REPORT OF SECRETARY.

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*To His Excellency, J. M. Stone,*

*Governor of the State of Mississippi.*

SIR:—By direction of the Board of Trustees of the Mississippi Asylum for the Blind, I now transmit to your Excellency the Annual Report of the Superintendent. The affairs of the Institution, and its necessities, are freely set fourth in the pages of said Report.

The Asylum intrusted to our care, has, during the past year, under the management of the present able Superintendent, reached a higher degree of usefulness and efficiency than it has possessed for several years past, and its unfortunate inmates are making rapid progress in the acquirement of an education and the appropriate means of self-support in after life.

We can safely say that the Institution is now becoming more and more, what it was designed to be, a temporary home and training School for the Blind, in which they may be graduated in all that is moral and useful, and from which, in proper time, they may emerge into society and occupy positions befitting their condition, and for which they may become adapted.

Respectfully submitted in behalf of the Board,

GEO. A. SMYTHIE,

*Secretary.*

# Report of Superintendent.

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*To the Trustees of the Mississippi Asylum for the Blind.*

GENTLEMEN:—In compliance with the usual custom and the requirements of the law, I herewith tender my second Annual Report.

The health of the pupils, during the past and present sessions has been good; with the exception of one or two cases of fever occurring near the close of last session, we have had little or no disease throughout the year.

The usual course is being pursued in the literary, musical and mechanical departments, and the pupils are making commendable progress.

The number of pupils attending the Institution this year is twenty eight; eight less than were registered the year previous. In explanation of this falling off, it may be stated that eight of the number sought the Institution more as an Infirmary, than as an educational establishment. Two, it is believed, were benefitted by the treatment given them by my predecessor, and left before the session closed. One died, and the remaining five, being only partially blind, and finding they were not benefitted by the treatment, left at the end of the session and did not again return.

This exhibit of only twenty eight pupils, which it is believed is the largest number ever received here, if we except those alluded to above, who were not properly pupils, is indeed a poor one when it is remembered that this Institution has been in operation more than twenty-five years. It is estimated there are at least five hundred blind persons in the State: of which number one hundred and eighty-seven are between the ages of eight and twenty one years—the most approved age for receiving instruction. It seems almost incredible, that notwithstanding the State has provided for this unfortunate class of people, free of charge, so few have availed themselves of its

liberality; but we find that the experience of all Institutions for the Blind has been the same in this respect.

The indifference, or whatever else it may be called, on the part of the parents and friends of the blind, in regard to their education, may be ascribed to a variety of causes. In the first place, there are many persons in the State, both blind and seeing, who do not know of the existence of our Institution; and many, who knowing, do not properly appreciate the advantages of an education to the blind. Again, many parents, from an excessive tenderness for their sightless children, are unwilling to part with them, or to trust them to the care of persons unknown to them. I am certain the attendance of pupils would be much larger, however, were it not for the impoverished condition of our people; especially in that class where the blind are mostly found, and that there are many of these afflicted ones, who, under more favorable circumstances, would soon avail themselves of the advantages offered them by this Institution.

I am in correspondence, now, with several pupils, who, having spent a session here, are desirous of returning, but lack the means to do so. To most of those living remote from the Institution, the expenses attendant upon a journey of one hundred and fifty, or two hundred miles, virtually excludes them.

Until the last year or two, the railroads, for the most part, have been very liberal toward the blind, particularly toward the pupils of this Institution. Now, however, as far as I am informed, full fare is exacted of them, by all the roads, with the exception of the Vicksburg and Meridian road, which only requires half fare.

To meet some of the difficulties which I have here enumerated, it has been suggested that an intelligent agent be sent out to inform the parents and friends of blind children that an Institution for their education does exist, and to explain to them the advantages offered by it. This suggestion is doubtless a good one, and in proof of it, I extract from the Report of the Superintendent of the Arkansas Institution, Mr. Otis Patton, a man of ripe and varied experience in all that appertains to the education of the blind, the following observations:

"Of the thirteen Southern Institutions for the blind, including those of Maryland and West Virginia, the Arkansas Institute is the youngest, save two: yet only two have a greater number of pupils. This favorable result is doubtless owing to the efforts which have been made to inform the blind of Arkansas, and their friends, of the existence and object of the Institution, by exhibitions, and personal visits to the blind, in their homes, as will appear from the fact, that of fifty pupils who have enjoyed the privileges of the Institution during the last two years, thirty-eight are from counties where I have given exhibitions; eight are from counties where I have made personal visits, and only four from other counties. Of the ninety-two blind persons who have been connected with the Institu-



tion, as pupils, since its organization, eighty-five are from twenty-two counties which have been visited, and only seven represent other counties."

I am not aware that any effort of this kind has ever been resorted to by this Institution, though two of my predecessors, in their reports suggested to the Legislature the propriety of some such step. Had the effort been made upon the plan of Mr. Patton, I have not a doubt the Institution would, years ago, have been filled to its utmost capacity. It would seem not very creditable to the State of Mississippi that, having embarked in the benevolent enterprise of taking care of her unfortunate blind, at least ten years in advance of the State of Arkansas, she should have been so far outstripped in the race by her sister State, whose material resources, as well as population, are much less. I cannot doubt, however, if the appeal had been made in furtherance of this object, at the proper time, it would have been favorably responded to by the Legislature.

In the remote counties, and especially in those far removed from the highways of travel, some such means would appear to be absolutely necessary.

To further promote this object, the Legislature might be appealed to to reenact so much of the Act of 1856, for the benefit of the blind (see chap. 128, sec. 2), as may require "the assessors of the several counties in the State to furnish the President of the Board of Trustees a list of the names of all the blind persons in the respective counties, with their condition and address."

Perhaps the most effectual remedy that could be applied, after all, and one more immediate in its effects, would be for the Legislature to require the counties to furnish the means necessary to pay the traveling expenses of the indigent blind to and from the Institution; this has been done in almost all of the other States, and seems to have served a good purpose; or, if it should be thought better, a specific amount might be appropriated by the Legislature to effect this object.

On a careful inspection of our register, I find a large majority of the pupils that have been admitted into this Institution, live, or have lived, in the immediate vicinity of the railroads traversing the State; showing that the blind so situated have not failed to profit by the facilities which the roads afford, in acquiring a knowledge of the educational advantages which the State has provided for them in this Institution, and in this instance, at least, have not been slow to embrace them.

It will be seen, by referring to the list of pupils, and the counties in which they reside, that but seventeen counties are represented in this Institution. Should not something be done, then, for the blind living in the counties not represented, to give them, as far as may be practicable, the same advantages which those in the more favored counties enjoy? Provision having been made for all the blind in the State susceptible of receiving instruction, it would seem but just and proper that



every reasonable facility be given, within the limited resources of the State, to promote this object.

To whatever cause it may be ascribed, it can be asserted with truth, that a smaller number of blind in the State of Mississippi, in proportion to the aggregate number, have received the benefits of an education, than any other State in the Union, where similar provision has been made for their instruction.

It becomes my duty to call your attention to the dilapidated condition of the Institution and its outbuildings. Something must be done within the next twelve months to save the main building, at least, from ruin. The foundation has been giving away in many places for some time past; and the building is settling so rapidly that the walls are yielding, and the plastering falling off in almost every room in the house. The roof, too, is leaking badly, and a new one is a positive necessity. This will involve, almost necessarily, the raising of the whole edifice, as it could not be done without it, the building being so much out of plumb.

What effect raising the edifice will have I cannot say; but I am disposed to think it will leave the plastering in so damaged a condition as to make it necessary to replaster the whole building.

In the present dilapidated state of the buildings, a sound policy would dictate the propriety of expending upon them no more money than would keep them up, and render them habitable, until the finances of the State are such that the old buildings can be replaced with new ones, better adapted to the purpose for which they were designed. The plan of the buildings, the main one especially, was bad; and no amount of money expended upon them now can ever make them what they should be. It will devolve upon the Committee on Benevolent Institutions, however, to determine what is best to be done.

In my last year's report, I estimated the outstanding indebtedness of the Institution at the close of the year would be \$2,770. On a final settlement I found it exceeded my estimate some \$230, making the whole amount \$3,000, which of course had to be paid out of the appropriation of \$8,000 made by the last Legislature for the support of the Institution. This left but \$5,000 to our credit; and when it was exhausted we were compelled to appeal to the State Board of Finance for means to carry us through the year. The Board, as you know, seeing our dilemma, came to our relief. We were permitted to draw on a trust fund in the treasury upon which the State was paying interest, for the sum of \$3,000, which was transferred to the credit of the Asylum for the Blind.

The report of the Treasurer will show the amount which has been disbursed by him, both of the original amount and the sum obtained from the Board of Finance.

Vouchers will be found in the hands of Mr. George A. Smythe,

Secretary of the Board of Trustees, for all expenditures that have been made during the current year.

Regarding this sum of \$3,000 as a loan which must be returned to the Treasury, it is to be hoped the Legislature, in making its next annual appropriation for the support of the Institution, will not fail to appropriate, also, a sufficient sum to cover this indebtedness.

We acknowledge ourselves under many obligations to the Superintendent of the Kentucky Institute for the Blind, B. B. Huntoon, for a very valuable accession to our library, consisting of quite a number of books, in raised print, of which we stood in much need. We, also, render our thanks to the proprietors of the following papers: Jackson Clarion, Jackson Pilot, Meridian Comet, Dwight's Musical Journal, and Goodson Gazette.

Respectfully submitted,

W. S. LANGLEY,

*Superintendent.*

# CATALOGUE OF PUPILS.

## FEMALES.

<i>Names.</i>	<i>County.</i>	<i>Cause of Blindness.</i>
Lacie L. Brown .....	Pontotoc.....	Congenital.
Harriet L. Brown.....	Pontotoc.....	Congenital.
Antoinette Carr.....	Attala.....	Cataract.
Dora Hickman.....	Lawrence.....	Congenital.
Penelope Dorsett.....	Tate.....	Inflammation.
Florence Graves.....	Hinds.....	Inflammation.
Arie Jones .....	Amite.....	Accident.
Sallie Marcum.....	Marshall.....	Small Pox.
Louisa Shumaker.....	Panola.....	Congenital.
Mollie Steedley.....	Scott.....	Congenital.
Fannie Steedley.....	Scott.....	Congenital.
Anna Walker.....	Copiah.....	Cataract.
Mollie Watson.....	Clarke.....	Fever.

## MALES.

<i>Names.</i>	<i>County.</i>	<i>Cause of Blindness.</i>
Henry Anderson.....	Hinds.....	_____.
Richmond Cane.....	Hinds.....	Inflammation.
Charlie Mullins.....	Amite.....	Accident.
Hawkins McGehee.....	Pike.....	Congenital.
William McKeever.....	Clarke.....	Congenital.
Henry Davis.....	Grenada.....	Congenital.
W. W. Moneyham.....	Marshall.....	Accident.
J. W. Parker.....	Marshall.....	Measles.
Albert Bradford.....	Marshall.....	Accident.
Dennis Walker.....	Simpson.....	Congenital.
William Watson.....	Marshall.....	Congenital.
Cornelius Winfree.....	Hinds.....	Inflammation.
William Coghill.....	_____	_____.
William Whitton.....	Chickasaw.....	Accident.
Robert Zachrv.....	Lauderdale.....	Fever.
Van Ferguson.....	Panola.....	Inflammation.





